

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS

1-64. (Canceled).

65. (Previously presented) A method for use in a computer system comprising at least one host and at least one storage system, the method comprising acts of:

(A) receiving a request, from the host, to delete a unit of content stored on the storage system, wherein a previously-defined retention period for the unit of content is stored in the unit of content, wherein the request identifies the unit of content using a content address generated, at least in part, from at least a portion of the content of the unit of content, and wherein the at least the portion of the content of the unit of content includes the previously-defined retention period and at least some other content in the unit of content;

(B) determining whether the previously-defined retention period for the unit of content has expired;

(C) when it is determined in the act (B) that the retention period for the unit of content has not expired, denying the request to delete the unit of content; and

(D) when it is determined in the act (B) that the retention period for the unit of content has expired, directly deleting the unit of content in response to the request.

66. (Previously presented) The method of claim 65, wherein the acts (A), (B) and (C) are performed by the storage system.

67. (Previously presented) The method of claim 65, further comprising an act (D) of, prior to performing the acts (A), (B) and (C), receiving information specifying the retention period for the unit of data.

68. (Previously presented) The method of claim 65, further comprising acts of, prior to performing the acts (A), (B) and (C):

- (D) receiving the unit of data at the storage system; and
- (E) writing the unit of data to the storage system.

69. (Previously presented) The method of claim 68, further comprising acts of, prior to performing the acts (A), (B) and (C):

- (F) receiving information specifying the retention period for the unit of data along with the unit of data; and
- (G) writing the information specifying the retention period to the storage system.

70. (Previously presented) At least one computer readable storage medium encoded with instructions that, when executed on a computer system, perform a method for use in the computer system, wherein the computer system comprises at least one host and at least one storage system, and wherein the method comprises acts of:

- (A) receiving a request, from the host, to delete a unit of content stored on the storage system, wherein a previously-defined retention period for the unit of content is stored in the unit of content, wherein the request identifies the unit of content using a content address generated, at least in part, from at least a portion of the content of the unit of content, and wherein the at least the portion of the content of the unit of content includes the previously-defined retention period and at least some other content in the unit of content;
- (B) determining whether the previously-defined retention period for the unit of content has expired;
- (C) when it is determined in the act (B) that the retention period for the unit of content has not expired, denying the request to delete the unit of content; and
- (D) when it is determined in the act (B) that the retention period for the unit of content has expired, directly deleting the unit of content in response to the request.

71. (Previously presented) The at least one computer readable storage medium of claim 70, wherein the acts (A), (B) and (C) are performed by the storage system.

72. (Previously presented) The at least one computer readable storage medium of claim 70, further comprising an act (D) of, prior to performing the acts (A), (B) and (C), receiving information specifying the retention period for the unit of data.

73. (Previously presented) The at least one computer readable storage medium of claim 70, further comprising acts of, prior to performing the acts (A), (B) and (C):

- (D) receiving the unit of data at the storage system; and
- (E) writing the unit of data to the storage system.

74. (Previously presented) The at least one computer readable storage medium of claim 73, further comprising acts of, prior to performing the acts (A), (B) and (C):

- (F) receiving information specifying the retention period for the unit of data along with the unit of data; and
- (G) writing the information specifying the retention period to the storage system.

75. (Previously presented) A storage system for use in a computer system comprising at least one host and the storage system, the storage system comprising:

at least one storage device, comprising at least one physical storage medium. to store data received from the at least one host; and

at least one controller that;

receives a request, from the host, to delete a unit of data stored on the storage system, wherein a previously-defined retention period for the unit of content is stored in the unit of content, wherein the request identifies the unit of content using a content address generated, at least in part, from at least a portion of the content of the unit of content, and wherein the at least the portion of the content of the unit of content includes the previously-defined retention period;

determines whether the previously-defined retention period for the unit of data has expired;

when it is determined that the retention period for the unit of data has not expired, denies the request to delete the unit of data and at least some other content in the unit of content; and

when it is determined that the retention period for the unit of content has expired, directly deletes the unit of content in response to the request.

76. (Previously presented) The storage system of claim 75, wherein the at least one controller receives information specifying the retention period for the unit of data.

77. (Previously presented) The storage system of claim 75, wherein the at least one controller receives the unit of data and writes the unit of data to the at least one storage device.

78. (Previously presented) The storage system of claim 75, wherein the at least one controller receives information specifying the retention period for the unit of data along with the unit of data and writes the information specifying the retention period to the at least one storage device.